

lsberg In those days, it was entirely unknown to civilians, including the Secretary of Defense (which is another story which I won't go into now), but it was a purely military domain, and by 1960 or so, I was probably the only civilian... <sup>the only one</sup> known to me... I think I was the only one who actually knew our war plans, our nuclear war plans in detail. <sup>my colleagues at Rand; for instance,</sup> (inaudible) and I have never seen such plans, people like (inaudible) ?

Q: Can I interrupt you about the... I'm a predecessor of yours and you're talking about '60... that would be 14 years...

Ellsberg I remember you did work at Rand, did you not?

No, I worked at (inaudible) headquarters there...

Ellsberg Oh, I didn't know that.

Q: We had polished off Japan (inaudible) Afterwards, naturally I was looking for something to do. <sup>I cooked up what they called an "emergency war plan"</sup> (inaudible) which would be (inaudible) in the event <sup>our response</sup> was that the Russians attacked (inaudible) Western Europe which at that time/just about defenseless, and the estimate was that there was no way to prevent them from running right up to the English Channel. So they devised a response which consisted of using B-29s... the great warship of the air in those days to drop nuclear bombs on virtually every capital city in Europe (inaudible) .. some of my colleagues did. <sup>(we got them on scrub it)</sup> (laughter) (inaudible) We did have that emergency war plan scrubbed by appearing to... Vandenberg who was then chief of the air staff. (inaudible)

Ellsberg Well, this is extremely interesting. First of all, you were a civilian at the time.

Oh, yeah.

Ellsberg And what had you been doing, operations analysis beforehand, or something like that?

That's right.

Ellsberg When I say the only civilian who knew the structure of these things, actually I have in mind some exceptions that I ran into in the late 50s who were in the structure

here and there...were civilians, operations analysts who worked on this or that aspect... They did some evaluation of plans, that's true. That's right, actually, I really hadn't thought of Wessig(?). I was thinking at the highest level where typically they didn't use these operations analysts, but Wessig did see the plans at the highest level. You're quite right. (Some of them.) This is very interesting because the plans you're talking about have just begun being declassified. There are the kinds of things that one wouldn't expect ever to be <sup>de-</sup>classified, but it has worked out with the Freedom of Information Act that the plans <sup>are</sup> the kind that normally, you know, (inaudible) that would never have been declassified, and there is an extraordinary amount available now and a guy named David Rosenberg at the University of Houston has been working in those archives and he was the one who got most of them declassified...he has a clearance (inaudible)so he sees it from both sides. He got it declassified and he has a piece in International Security of Winter '81-82 on plans of the mid-50s which included Wessig report. (?) But he has a...~~in~~ the latest issue which is coming out March 15 <sup>on</sup> the plans from '45-'60 (which would probably include the ones you're talking about) and ~~it's~~ really an extraordinary piece. It's a marvelous long piece, the longest thing International Security has ever done, about 70 pages. It's really interesting. So now, could I pursue that, <sup>??</sup> because now I've read those, thanks to him. I've read some of these back-up plans and so forth. What year was that?

That would be probably '47.

Ellsberg How late did you stay in? After the war?

That's how I conveyed it. (Inaudible)

B-G (Laughter)

Ellsberg Now '47 would probably have been a plan called Pinscher (?). Do you remember a code name for that... Well, he's got, you know, one by one all the plans basically, but now in what sense do... what makes you think or in what sense...in what basis did you get somebody to scrub it because this is the nature of the plan.



Before he had signed off...explained to him...

Ellsberg

What did you say was wrong with it?

(inaudible) I said that it would make the (inaudible) *whole construct unworkable*

there was no way he could manage. (inaudible) I had no substitute but he

recognized that (inaudible) *something that was as bad as losing the war*

Ellsberg

And what did they do then as far as you know?

That's what I said (inaudible)

Ellsberg

Well, let me tell you...I hate to tell you this (laughter)

Before you tell him, can I ask what <sup>the</sup> point of it was supposed to be?

Of laying waste to capitals and ....

You'll have to ask the people who wrote it...

Ellsberg

Wait a minute...you're not saying, or did I hear something...didn't you say

Russia or did you say all Western....

All Western....They had (inaudible) Paris, Berlin, Vienna.

Ellsberg

On the assumption the Russians had occupied...

On the assumption they would then be occupied. Yeah.

Ellsberg

Ohh! That's one I hadn't heard. I didn't hear you...I put it into the framework

of what I did know already too quickly. You did run across a very interesting

plan. (laughter) The fact is that the closest I know to that...which is only

moderately close...is that a <sup>NATO</sup> ~~Nato~~ courier/ <sup>named</sup> Johnson defected to the Soviets in

1962 and he took with him a whole set of the <sup>NATO</sup> ~~Nato~~ war plans...'62...~~it~~ <sup>it</sup> wasn't

a big secret to the Russians from then on. They got very thorough plans <sup>which</sup> but the

Russians began to feed back to <sup>NATO</sup> ~~Nato~~ capitals ever since then <sup>in the</sup> various crises

they feed back the Johnson war plan, and nobody has ever contradicted these

plans. <sup>they are very obvious.</sup> ~~now~~ these are <sup>NATO</sup> ~~Nato~~ war plans which on the whole I didn't see.....targeting.

but I do know that they corresponded exactly to the higher level war plans that

I did know at the time, <sup>and</sup> what created great interest in Nato at the time,

especially when they did this recently, was that there were a lot of German

targets, or <sup>Nato</sup> targets but they didn't include capitals, but they were air fields, which you have to expect, <sup>N</sup>aturally, in any such war...they are going to take out all the air fields and...<sup>at least their <sup>one</sup> target</sup>, they're prepared to take them out. So the Danes and the Dutch and the Germans were very interested to see that there was German coordinates in the war plans. That was really quite interesting. Actually, I think they found it so incredible that it didn't have that big a political impact. People thought...it was known to be coming from the Russians and I could see that that was almost surely accurate when I looked at it. But I know...I talked to people <sup>(it was published in the state)</sup> <sup>(inaudible)</sup> and they couldn't take it fully seriously... They didn't know what they had here <sup>could be so</sup> but it didn't have capitals on...that really interested me.

We were still in the Russian syndrome, but that's what you did with the...

Ellsberg

Yeah. Well, however, now here's what I thought you were going to say and here's what the plans...so you probably were right. <sup>He</sup> probably did change that, for all I know, <sup>B</sup>ut the plan that I saw in 1959-60 was a plan...was the single plan the United States had for fighting Russians under any circumstances and this reflected a decade of new look and the new look, <sup>the bigger bang for the <sup>reliance</sup></sup> <sup>(inaudible)</sup> <sup>the alliance</sup> on nuclear weapons...Eisenhower's political economy <sup>at</sup> and work here is believed to ...Eisenhower's first political guidance for the war plan modified the Truman guidance in the following way: the Truman guidance for the war plans <sup>had</sup> started with the statement, the No. 1 to this effect: The No. 1 threat is <sup>from</sup> the Soviet Union...let's say the late Truman...by the end of Truman's regime...from their nuclear capability and their threat against Western Europe, and that was the No. 1 threat facing the United States, <sup>and</sup> then it goes on to other Soviet threats. Eisenhower, in '53, changed that to the following sentence: The two major threats facing the United States <sup>are</sup> and the threat posed <sup>to</sup> the U.S. interest by Soviet Union possession of a nuclear capability and general activity and so forth, and second, on an equal level, the threat posed to our economy by the necessity to deal with the first threat, and Humphrey's fear



of inflation and the fact that depression would follow inflation led Eisenhower not only rhetorically...<sup>in a</sup> Top Secret document...but in practice, to give extremely high priority to limiting the money spent on national defense, there having been fourfold increase in the defense budget, thanks to Paul <sup>NITZE</sup> ~~Mitrah~~ (?) and others around the time that the Korean War started <sup>in</sup> and association with <sup>NSC 68</sup> (inaudible).

So the defense budget had gone from 13 billion going toward 9 or 10 billion...

it was <sup>the ambition</sup> (inaudible) to get it down to 10 billion. It suddenly went...in 18 months, it went to over 40 billion where it stayed from then on, <sup>but</sup> Eisenhower's ambition....his determination was to keep it from going much above 40 billion,

despite what was seen as a growing Soviet threat, <sup>and</sup> the result of that was that Eisenhower himself went along with an Air Force project designed to give the Air Force predominance among the services and to allow a big Air Force, that there wouldn't be much but an Air Force, <sup>So</sup> the Eisenhower Air Force project was then to cut back...to break through the one third, one third, one third type of allocation and give the Air Force something that sometimes went up as high as 40-45% of the budget, <sup>for the one service,</sup> cutting back the others. This led to a plan for operational

use which precluded explicitly any form of limited war with the Soviet Union <sup>and</sup> under any circumstances, meaning neither limited conventional nor limited nuclear war. There was only one form of planning and preparing for conflict with the Soviet Union, armed conflict with the Soviet Union, and that was an all-out attack including the full use of SAC against a predetermined target list. Armed conflict is defined as not including patrols, skirmishes in the Berlin <sup>Corridor</sup> (inaudible) a

platoon or two, or maybe a battalion or two. It was anything higher than that, <sup>if</sup> anything that must be assumed to be directed by Soviet authority, <sup>so</sup> it involved <sup>(not an inadvertent clash)</sup> (inaudible) <sup>in armed conflict</sup> so if it was a regiment or more (inaudible) there was a single plan for armed conflict with the Soviet Union anywhere in the world, <sup>Iran, Cuba where they turned up the next year, Berlin Corridor, uprising satellites that the Westerns</sup> got involved in. However it arose, "in such circumstances, the general war plan will be executed." And the general war plan called for, as quickly as

possible and simultaneously as possible using all available forces, keeping no reserves, extending all...the entire stockpile of thermonuclear weapons on every city in the Soviet Union, every military base that they had weapons left for and every city in China (because there was no plan whatever for a war with Russia that did not include the destruction of China, known as the Sino-Soviet block although by '60 that was already, you know, very much in question. In fact, was not really a reality, but it was still assumed to be a Sino-Soviet block so you get all this. This was...

Q: What was (inaudible) this strategy.

Ellsberg

What? This is the operational plan. The war did not arrive. We didn't fight. For example, in 1960 or '61, Khrushchchev did not carry out his absolute unequivocal promise to sign a peace treaty with East Germany by the end of 1961, and which would result, he said, in the Germans then taking control of the Corridor (and we expected <sup>that</sup> ~~them~~ to mean that they would close or interfere with access to the Corridor) in which case, our contingency plans called for threatening that on the ground, <sup>But</sup> since there were seven Soviet divisions in the immediate vicinity of Berlin, we ~~Could~~ not...any force we sent in there that we were able to send in there could be surrounded and overwhelmed by that, in which case we could only initiate nuclear war and there was no plan for initiating anything but all-out nuclear war. Now...

Q: Is it assumed that this plan was known to the Soviets?

Ellsberg

Well, this was what they publicly said it was...I mean, it was basically what we said. Of course, most Democrats and most people assumed that Dulles was being very rhetorical about all this. What I'm saying is that massive retaliation was not just Dulles sounding off, that slogan, that program was embodied in the actual operational plans, the training, the SOP's, the deployment of our weapons all over the world.

Q: My question <sup>is: was</sup> ~~was~~ this plan ~~is~~ for its threat value and to have the threat value (inaudible) but, as some hostile reaction.

had to be known to the Russians not as mere



Ellsberg By the way, this does get to the subject you were... let me name a broad subject into which this falls and <sup>now</sup> I'm just going through all of this for historical ~~reasons~~ (inaudible) There is a theoretical aspect to this, if people are interested.

I want to propose from my knowledge of planning as applied to the later periods because thanks now to people like Desmond Ball (?) and David Rosenberg, and whatnot, an extraordinary amount is now knowable about ~~China~~ <sup>current planning</sup> in a way it was never ~~known~~ <sup>known</sup> notable to the outside for a number of reasons. There is a lot more that is quite well known about what the <sup>nature of the plans is now</sup> ~~plans~~. Extraordinarily, they seem to be similar to the plans of 1961, and that is more true than they were in the intervening period of about 1970. So it turns out that my knowledge of the plans did not erode totally with time, as I expected them to. I would have thought that what I knew about the plans <sup>in 50 or 51</sup> ~~was~~ would have been totally irrelevant by the time the Russians got <sup>hardened</sup> ~~missiles~~ missiles and submarines that would require a different structure. That has not turned out to be <sup>the case</sup> (inaudible). I was just talking to the PSR, <sup>Physicians</sup> ~~Positions~~ for Social Responsibility telling them I felt that the understanding of the arms race on which they operated is, I thought, an inadequate one. So let me present it briefly, a different approach. In answer to your question, I think, well, first, I think that the structure of our weapons and our plan and our declaratory policy in fact serves <sup>a</sup> ~~as~~ <sup>of</sup> system/ threats, a strategy of threats-[I call it a system of threats actually because it's threats backing up threats and actions that are meant to affect the credibility of layer upon layer of threats.] So one can call <sup>this</sup> ~~it~~ deterrence, but it's a rather complex form of deterrence, and if certain forms of deterrence fail and certain actions have to be carried out, there <sup>still</sup> are other things that deter you, other objectives to be met by this, and a great deal then, I believe, of what we do in the way of buying weapons, designing weapons, <sup>deploying them</sup> (inaudible) and talking about them is meant not to fight a war--certainly a large scale war, if possible--but to have a real world effect upon events and <sup>in effect</sup> ~~in fact~~ bargaining at low levels of conflict and <sup>in</sup> the peripheral confrontations in the world. A lot of this is explicit in the current administration, but I

what has been understood  
think they are only making explicit weapons ~~in~~ privately (inaudible) for a  
whole generation here, and that is the belief--~~if~~ they are implementing a  
belief that confrontations (not only with the Soviets, but even more with the  
clients of the Soviets or potential liberation forces--Third World forces of  
various kinds--around the world)...confrontations like that are avoided or managed  
or won in part by the manipulation of the structure of our nuclear and other  
military <sup>capabilities</sup> (inaudible) that appear to be designed for high levels of conflict  
and our ability to escalate a nuclear war or even to fight a nuclear war, the  
fighting particularly, has an impact on the likelihood that we will be challenged  
or successfully challenged in non-nuclear <sup>conflicts</sup> conference or a crisis--that is the  
belief, <sup>if I think that is reflected</sup> (inaudible) and I'll go further and say, and I say this belief gives  
what these various administrations do much more coherence, <sup>from</sup> than the point of view  
of their strategic objective, <sup>than</sup> and is usually credited <sup>to them</sup> (inaudible) by outsiders  
and even critics, especially critics; and also much more continuity; and <sup>that</sup> ~~if~~ the  
continuity across administrations is not merely a product of bureaucratic inertia  
or anachronism, but of a fairly constant set of perceptions of U.S. interests and  
how to meet those interests, <sup>that</sup> and specifically ~~it~~ is not as -- if I can give an  
example as sort of a <sup>Kennedy</sup> Chinese school emphasis on bureaucratic politics would suggest,  
or as most arms control <sup>etc would suggest --</sup> (inaudible) I think that what we buy and what we do with  
the weapons we buy is not to be understood only or mainly as the result of a  
fairly incoherent and complex set of <sup>internal</sup> pressures within the bureaucracy and within  
the domestic economy that have no relation <sup>to objectives in the world outside,</sup> (inaudible) and have no centralized  
direction. I think this is the basic model of the arms race, that the arms  
control association works with, including, you know, people whose efforts I  
respect very much but I mean people like <sup>Warrick, Pete Scoville, or others</sup> (inaudible) work with (publicly at least)  
the kind of basic model of the arms race that it is produced essentially by  
domestic pressures on both sides both in Russia and the U.S. The key concept here  
is <sup>overkill - that</sup> (inaudible) the only imaginable, legitimate and really the only effective  
function one can think of for nuclear weapons is to deter their use by an opponent,  
<sup>to deter the use of nuclear weapons.</sup>



in the light of that single imaginable objective it seems fairly evident that we ~~undermined~~ <sup>were undermined</sup> in various ways by the kinds of weapons we buy and we buy a lot more weapons than can possibly be justified by that approach. So people who start with that notion of our objective then are led to look for some other reason why we're buying all these weapons. And they come up with the motives of the weapons laboratories, you know, careerism, an ideological commitment to nuclear weapons, profits of the manufacturers, votes to the Congressman whose districts ~~are affected~~ <sup>are affected</sup> (inaudible) various bureaucratic pressures that generate this mountain of <sup>don't</sup> weapons. I don't think that's true. I think that's the main reason, although obviously these things ~~all~~ <sup>do all</sup> operate and all are a part of it, And I think to repeat what I said a minute ago, that there is among other things, there is, in fact, a coherent strategy and conception which these weapons serve. On the U.S. side, and a fairly new hypothesis for me is because it's new that the Russians are coming to look very similar to our posture institutionally and in the weapons they are actually buying. I'm prepared to conjecture that the aims and conceptions on the Russian side are similar or might be similar to those that I see on our side, and that's not obvious because my own understanding of what we are doing is an unusual one, and to attribute that to the Russians is even more unusual and it's more ~~projectual~~ <sup>speculative</sup>, as far as I'm concerned personally. It's from outside, in that case as far as I'm concerned. What I say is happening is that from '45 on our leaders have felt that American interests involved (worldwide) involve us in a need to not only exercise financial influence and CIA type of influence, which are major tools for us (starting with financial and industrial and commercial pressures which we can ~~(inaudible)~~ <sup>well for more than the</sup> Russians or anybody else), but that to back up those interests of various kinds, (largely in the third world, but <sup>also Europe</sup>) we also have to be prepared to provide a U.S. troop presence, not only in Europe but expeditionary forces elsewhere, and that these vital interests which justify, which are defined by justifying, U.S. intervention far around the world and various places, like Vietnam and Korea, as well as <sup>Latin America</sup> (inaudible) have to be backed

up because they can so easily be overwhelmed by local forces so far from our shores, have to be backed up by a willingness and a readiness <sup>and a capability</sup> to support those troops with nuclear weapons when necessary, not just routinely, (although actually Eisenhower who was never challenged on this too much did come close to envisioning a routine use if we got involved, but we weren't too involved under Eisenhower, but on the whole what I discovered fairly recently actually, separately from my knowledge of the war plan was that, in fact, we have made first use threats a number of times and this is in this--how many of you have seen this paper, The Call to Mutiny, it's the introduction to Protest and Survive by Edward Thompson (2) and it came out in Monthly Review. I'll leave a copy. That shows a pattern of threats of first use of tactical nuclear weapons a dozen times or so since '45, most of them secret at the time, some not.

Q: How can threats be secret?

Ellsberg

Secret obviously not from the opponent but the opponent's shared with us the secrecy because in most cases they back<sup>d</sup> down and were not anxious to publicize that fact, so they kept the secret, just as Khrushchev kept the secret of our U-2 flights which he couldn't shoot down. It wasn't in his interest to reveal that he was not able to do anything about this U-2 flight, so he collaborated with us on the secrecy of it, and virtually all of these people have refrained from legitimizing nuclear threats by doing what they could have done, say <sup>and</sup> "we've just gotten a nuclear threat, this is outrageous," and so on and so forth. The fact is that in most cases, the opponent did back down or at least the threat wasn't triggered, and this includes, for instance, Korea, '53, where Eisenhower believes that it was <sup>his</sup> <sup>Pan (?) War</sup> actual nuclear threat that caused the Chinese to accept his terms at <sup>that</sup> ~~and said~~ (inaudible). Now a lot of people who know that he said that in his memoirs seven years after the event, eight years, I think, have dismissed it on the grounds ~~and said~~, well, there were a lot of other reasons for the Chinese to back down, Stalin had just died, this, this and that, so they tossed it aside and paid very little attention to the fact attested by everyone who knew Eisenhower, Sherman Adams and various



chiefs of staff, including Eisenhower. He believed that the threat had been effective, which is pretty significant--that's in '53, his first months in office, when it comes to deciding what to do in the next confrontation, and he indeed <sup>did</sup> use such threats in '55 in the Tatron? Islands dispute and in '58 very seriously (inaudible) Morton <sup>Halperin</sup> ~~(?)~~ one thing that really put me on the track of this was Mort Halperin's top secret study of the <sup>Quemont</sup> Crisis in '58, where it was evident that we had come probably closer to actual nuclear war than at any other time in the whole period. The Chinese did back down, but since we didn't expect them to do it, we weren't sure they would do it and there is no evident reason why they did, other than the threat, so in this case, again, Eisenhower certainly believed the threats had succeeded. He was very (inaudible). He, I think, was quite determined to carry them out, the Chinese knew it and now we get into one other factor as to, <sup>if you ask</sup> ~~you see~~, why the threats weren't carried out... The first point is that in nearly every case, Korea, <sup>50</sup> Korea '53, Tatron? Islands '55, <sup>Quemont</sup> Komoi? '58, <sup>Kho Sur</sup> Caison? '68, where threats were made like this...the opponent either backed down or the threat wasn't triggered. In '54, we offered nuclear weapons to the French for the defense of <sup>Dien Bien Phu</sup> Phu? when they were surrounded. They were taken, but that was because the French turned down the weapons because they felt the Chinese were too close to their troops and their troops would be endangered and they feared retaliation, <sup>in Europe</sup> so it doesn't disprove the rule. Now I see again these threats are still being made, newly being made now, <sup>for reasons we will</sup> but I want to deal with this more abstractly than I usually do since I don't usually have the occasion to do these things.

What do you think then (inaudible) threat is made ... <sup>unknown...</sup>

Ellsberg What do I think...ahh...when is it made?

Back in '59 when some company was....

Ellsberg Yes, exactly, I mean good question? Actually I found that if you take the dozen or so threats we know of, and by the way there is a new article, International

Security, on threats made on both sides in '73 which is new data based on interviews in the '73 war. It fits the pattern exactly...the Arab-Israeli War.) Apparently the Israelis made the threat, the Soviets seemed to have made a threat, and we made a threat and the...what it fits into, exactly two situations...they all fit into one of two categories, namely, when an American or allied unit was surrounded and in danger of being overrun, [a major tactical defeat, not a battalion, something higher than that, not too big, a couple of regiments or something,] every time that happened, seven or eight times, the American president prepared plans for imminent use of nuclear weapons and on several of those occasions, we know that he communicated those plans to the opponent, and on the other occasions we know that he leaked them to the press so they did get to the opponent, and also preparations were visible to the opponent <sup>in terms of alert and movements</sup> and so forth; in fact, more visible to the opponent than to the public. The other occasion was two, twice, when there was a long stalemated war, a new president coming in, [Eisenhower in '53, Nixon in '69, who had been Eisenhower's Vice President during three or four of these previous episodes, Korea, Dien Bien Phu, Lebanon, which I didn't get into in '58 and which amazingly enough involved nuclear planning]. Now what the nuclear planning was? Not Lebanon, the key emphasis in Lebanon was--remember there had been an uprising, an unexpected leftist uprising in Iraq just before that...sent everybody into a panic. They hadn't expected this at all. Shimon had been asking for help for sometime in connection with his troubles so they used the excuse of Shimon to get troops into the Middle East very fast in Lebanon, but the real focus was on Iraq. The British, however, were to keep the main watch on Iraq if it was needed to put troops into Iraq--we were to be in the area in Lebanon--but it turns out that the worst fear that they had at that time was that the Iraqis would move into Kuwait, and there was no mincing of words of what they were worried about in Kuwait--the oil of Kuwait. Eisenhower authorized Twining, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to prepare plans to use nuclear weapons against the Iraqis if they should go into Kuwait, which, you know, in terms of



current preoccupation, it is a very interesting little piece of history back in '58 and as somebody who lived through that, I had just left the Marines at that point--I had been in Suez the year before and was following all that pretty closely. I certainly didn't care a whole lot about Kuwait in the papers at that point, or even Iraq as our concern, but that turns out to be a major concern...so Nixon had been through all this and ~~Nixon~~...Haldeman reports then and (this has been confirmed then by other people since then) that Nixon came into office determined to end the Vietnam War...to win it, actually...the way Eisenhower had ended the Korean War by threatening, as Haldeman puts it, massive escalation with the possible use of nuclear weapons. Now Eisenhower had not threatened the possible use, he had threatened definite use. Nixon, on the other hand, did prepare target folders and plans for the possible use of nuclear weapons, he said possible use, but he didn't carry out ~~(inaudible)~~ <sup>for reasons I could go into...</sup> But now let me say once one realizes--let me just follow this model for a minute, but I'll attach it to reality to this extent--when you realize that presidents have had occasion to make such threats a number of times..as I say generally secretly, the threats were relatively explicit over Berlin and as a possible contingency with the Cuban Crisis, but in the other cases, it tended not to be known anymore than assassination efforts tended to be known, even within the bureaucracy...very closely held lest people worry. No crowing was done over our successes. Second, they did believe they had been successful, which was why they kept doing it. When you see that, I then turned (inaudible) to say, could this have some bearing on what else they do in the field of nuclear weapons and now you can begin to see the kind of coherence to the kinds of weapons they buy and when they buy them, the urgency <sup>with which</sup> that they buy them, and so forth, <sup>so</sup> I'll just suggest as a hypothetical model which I believe is a very realistic one, that in fact the kinds of weapons designed and bought are not simply suggested by the technology available. The directions in which potential technology is exploited can be explained as efforts to make as credible as possible U.S. willingness to escalate a nuclear war if the Soviets should choose

to make that nuclear war two-sided. In other words, efforts to deter the Soviets from retaliation to the use of nuclear weapons in a tactical situation, mostly in the Third World, against a Soviet client, to produce, in other words, exactly the situation which was achieved almost unquestionably in 1958, when the Soviets did not feel able to comply with the Chinese request for an assurance that if the U.S. used nuclear weapons against them <sup>in the Quemoy</sup> Crisis, the Russians would retaliate. Second, the Chinese asked, according to the Chinese, for two or three small weapons that they could control themselves. They wanted two things, Russian backup and their own couple of weapons, and the Russians refused both of those and this led to very bad feelings, <sup>and</sup> the following year is when the Russians pulled out their nuclear technicians from China and others in the Russian-China split had a lot to do with that, with this success by the U.S. Well, the objective is to assure that that happens in the future.

Q: Are you suggesting that from the point of view of <sup>a first strike by</sup> the (inaudible) United States against <sup>Arms or</sup> (inaudible) together with the possibility of retaliation by the Soviet Union and further retaliation then by the United States...there is no (inaudible) It's just the right number?

Ellsberg: Well, no, put it another way. Do the Russians have too many tanks? <sup>in East Europe?</sup> We keep saying they have too many tanks for their own defense...for their own defense of what? For their own defense of East Europe? What those tanks have been used for is to intimidate and put down the <sup>rebellions</sup> in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and recently in Poland on their borders. Do they have too many for that purpose? How can you have too many <sup>?</sup> when twice as many would be better. If what you're trying to do is <sup>to</sup> ~~trying to~~ assure that people don't challenge you, by posing them with the likelihood of overwhelming power if they do challenge you, you can't have too many. I'm saying that if you are trying...if you have in mind making first use threats not promiscuously, not when not necessary, but in desperate situations where the necessity is the necessity to avoid prolonging a stalemate in war or



to...a necessity is to avoid a tactical defeat of a U.S. or allied unit. It's just that. It's not less than that, but it's just that. If it's your intent to use nuclear weapons against an ally of the Soviet Union which has been our target in every case. In a world where the Soviets have 20,000 nuclear weapons to land or use, you can't have too many nuclear weapons and the kind you want are precisely the kind we keep designing or buying, not some other kind. For example, but I'm saying this is conception which in my mind...think as a hypothesis...what?

(inaudible) what type of weapons? (inaudible)

Ellsberg

All right, now we'll get to that...use the model. <sup>IS</sup> At least what I'm saying clear enough now as a proposition? So let's see, what kind of weapons would that generate, let's say, and see how it fits. All right. Now I'll give one.... an aspect of this....first of all, let me mention...let me make...I think it will simplify things in our minds if I make a few conceptual distinctions here that <sup>aren't</sup> <sup>made</sup> usually ~~make~~...I will use first use to refer to...I'll use first strike to refer to, essentially, a disarming strike against strategic forces, the long-range forces...I'll be specific, the Soviet Union, for the U.S. The U.S. first strike then, will be our best effort to disarm the Soviet Union and do whatever else we do in accompaniment of that, maybe hit cities or whatever else we do. A first use, then, will be <sup>a</sup> ~~an~~ initiation of nuclear war other than that, typically ~~then~~ use of tactical weapons whether against Soviets in Europe, let's say, or in Iran or against a Soviet ally, whoever else we're fighting...that I'll call first use. In first strikes, let me mention three different circumstances in which a first strike could take place. There are names for two of these, although the main one has never had a name of its own, which leads to obscurity in our discussion. It could be essentially out of the blue, the first strike could be the first use. It could be the beginning of conflict, a surprise attack, like <sup>a</sup> the Pearl Harbor attack. To my knowledge, that has never been espoused by any president, or plan <sup>has</sup> at a high level, although it's actually been proposed from

time to time by surprising high level people. Symington once proposed it in early 1951... NSC 100 when he was head of Defense Mobilization and various generals have proposed it from time to time (~~inaudible~~) Lincoln was always known to be partial to it, but the fact is that has never been U.S. policy, and when the presidents say we do not have a first strike policy and thus our weapons are not first strike weapons, this is what they're ruling out, this use. By the way, as far as we know, the Russians have never planned such a thing either. And this is what <sup>there</sup> ~~their~~ ruling out when they say they don't have any first strike weapons. You can call this preventive war. Second would be a use of those weapons in anticipation of an imminent enemy strike, use them before you lose them. This is known as pre-emptive strike, taking the initiative in the imminent situation that the alternative is to be struck or probably to be struck shortly, so this is thought of as a kind of retaliation or defense but it is called striking second first. It's taking the initiative and it does use the same capabilities you would use in a preventive war, but...so you understand that. This has always been U.S. policy and Russian policy from what we know of a Russian doctrine in their manuals. If you are about to be struck, you do not wait to be struck, and the notion to the public that you wait till the warheads fall has never been <sup>either</sup> the Air Force policy or presidential policy. The advantage of getting your weapons, whether planes or missiles, off the ground <sup>be done</sup> ~~or for~~ the enemy weapons... <sup>off the</sup> is felt to be so enormous that these plans have always been premised on doing that if you had the warning. These presume to (~~inaudible~~) <sup>shade into one another</sup> if you want another, depending on how you define...

Ellsberg

Well, we're talking here...yes, they could but...let's say imminent and let's say by that a day or two or something. Yeah, sure, you could think, well, if this is coming a month from now, but that would still be in...preventive war. I'm saying basically a tactical...a period of time you expect the attack in a period of time related to the flight time of missiles and the preparation... <sup>time</sup> hours



or minutes, or maybe a day, not weeks...we're not talking about weeks. So this is (inaudible) A third one is what we're actually committed to do for NATO and have always been committed and that is in the event of a tactical nuclear war started by either side, which is either stalemated or which we are losing, we are committed to use of our strategic forces whether they have used theirs or whether they have any or not, and these plans existed before Russia had, in '47, before Russia had any nuclear forces. Our plans in those days were only for strike forces. There was no second strike. The Russians weren't expected to have nuclear weapons for years. We were multiplying our nuclear weapons for this purpose and we always had these plans. I'll call that an escalatory first strike. The two kinds then of uses of our forces, of our strategic forces...our practical...pre-emptive and escalatory and these two are related. The third we could initiate then in tactical use, (inaudible) Paul Nitzah(?) who has as big an effect on all this structure as anybody, or any other individual, in the present to now, and going back, of course, 1968, said in 1966 spelled out a lot of this in the following terms; it is very difficult, almost impossible for the country, any country, any government, he said, seriously to contemplate initiating the use of nuclear weapons--this was in an area now when the Soviets (inaudible) <sup>did have nuclear weapons</sup>--without some reason to hope that the use will be unilateral. <sup>to be made statement</sup> Can there be such a reason to hope in a world where both sides have nuclear weapons. Answer: yes, with a sufficient degree of superiority on the side using <sup>the</sup> initiative. It has reason to hope that if it uses its weapons in a sufficiently limited way, say against an ally, not against the Soviet Union itself, in a very limited way against the Soviet Union, that its superiority backup here will keep the Soviets from replying at all. This I'm saying was (spelling) Nitzah's argument in '56 and I conjecture that this underlies the structure of our planning this idea right along. Now superiority, if possible, conveys what you're after, but I'll come now up to the present. I think there is a way to do it <sup>that</sup> if they now conceive a way to do it without superiority in a strict sense, and

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they have to have to do it without superiority because you can't get superiority  
*so you need to have it.*  
(inaudible). Let me first divide now two phases of the nuclear era, roughly, for  
my purposes. In the first, which lasted very much longer than anyone even  
Nitzah<sup>it</sup> probably expected it could last, much longer than scientists, on the  
whole, or launch controllers and doves-ever could imagine, to last, was a period  
of immense U.S. superiority. The Soviets made every effort to match us  
qualitatively as quickly as they could, which was usually within three or four  
years. At having tested <sup>a</sup>the capabilities, on most cases they tended not to buy  
large numbers of it. The exception was medium and intermediate range, <sup>rockets,</sup> but they  
did not buy the long-range bombers. They did not buy large numbers of <sup>ICBM's</sup>(inaudible)  
or submarines; <sup>capable</sup>missiles as late as 1961, So the new look period, the period  
of massive retaliation, which looked so dangerous that no one could take it  
seriously at the time. (You had to believe these were nothing but bluffs,  
rather implausible bluffs, and therefore risky.) That was actually a period in  
which this...our superiority was vastly greater than almost anybody...including  
people at <sup>Rand</sup> Rand (sp.?) <sup>made it</sup>Imagine, and I'll give you a measure of that. In the year  
of the Berlin crisis in 1961...the final year of the Berlin crisis...that was the  
year of the predicted missile gap...in fact, in June of '61, the last missile gap  
~~predicted that the Russians...~~ or estimated that the Russians then had a 120  
ICBM's. (sp.?) . This was the lowest estimate they'd had yet, 120. The State  
guessed 160, the Air Force said several hundred in a footnote, and actually the  
SAC commander was estimating to the President that they had 1,000 missiles of  
whose location we knew only 200. We then had 40 ICBM's

(End of Tape)